

Provincial Water Quality Monitoring Network

Scientific Information for Managing and Protecting our Water Resources

The Provincial Water Quality Monitoring Network (PWQMN) collects surface water quality information from rivers and streams at close to 400 locations across Ontario.

Why do we monitor water quality?

Monitoring helps us understand the impacts of land use activities (e.g. urbanization) on water quality so that we can make informed decisions about managing and protecting our water resources. Monitoring also helps us measure the effectiveness of programs and policies that are designed to protect and restore water quality.

How does the PWQMN work?

The success of the PWQMN is based upon partnerships. Partners include the Ontario Ministry of the Environment (MOE), conservation authorities, municipalities and Ontario Parks. Partners collect water samples for analysis in the MOE laboratory. Water quality data are managed by the MOE on behalf of the partnership. Data are shared by the partners and made available to the public and other stakeholders upon request.



What kind of information is collected?

A standard set of water quality indicators is monitored at each PWQMN station, including chloride, nutrients, suspended solids, trace metals and other general chemistry parameters. Disease-causing substances, pesticides and other contaminants are monitored in detailed water quality surveys in priority watersheds.

How is the information used?

Information generated by the PWQMN supports the development and implementation of water protection programs and activities such as source protection plans, nutrient management plans, assessing applications for water takings and setting water quality standards.

How does the information generated by PWQMN benefit water protection planning?

Analysis of surface water data over time will support the ongoing development, implementation and refinement of source protection plans and other water protection activities. Monitoring information is used to characterize water quality conditions and trends on a watershed basis, to identify water quality issues and to measure the ongoing effectiveness of source protection plans.

What improvements have been made to the PWQMN?

The PWQMN has been significantly improved as part of the Ontario government's commitment to having the best science to support provincial water protection efforts.

The PWQMN has been improved by:

- Increasing the number of sampling locations to provide province-wide baseline data on surface water quality.
- Establishing province-wide standards for collecting surface water quality data to ensure consistent, high quality information.
- Monitoring more substances.
- Equipping network partners with modern high-tech instruments for water quality monitoring.
- Conducting detailed water quality surveys in priority watersheds to assess the performance of water protection activities.

The PWQMN currently has 390 monitoring stations operated in partnership with 30 conservation authorities up from approximately 240 stations and 19 conservation authority partners in 2000.

to better understand the impacts of land uses on surface water quality.

Where can I find more information about the PWQMN?

For information about the PWQMN refer to <http://www.ene.gov.on.ca/envision/water/pwqmn/index.htm>.

or contact :

Aaron Todd

PWQMN Coordinator

Aaron.Todd@ene.gov.on.ca

